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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine if preservice teachers perceived that state-mandated teaching competencies were important and if they felt competent in these mandated areas. The subjects were 313 preservice teachers enrolled in elementary education at Mississippi State University and Florida State University in the spring of 1989. The subjects responded to a survey instrument developed by the researchers to identify the preservice teachers' perceptions of teacher effectiveness. The teaching competencies from both Mississippi and Florida evaluation modules were used to develop the survey instrument. Results indicated that the preservice teachers perceived items pertaining to planning, classroom instruction, and school environment to be important and that they felt competent on these items. They perceived the teaching competencies included in the states' evaluation instruments to be important and also felt competent on these items. A recommendation is made for similar longitudinal studies to be conducted prior to any field-based experience, after 20 hours of field-based experience, after student teaching, and after completion of one year of teaching experience. Five pages of tables displaying the data are included. (JD)

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PRESERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

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PRESERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF
TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Introduction

Recent reforms in education at the state level have served to alter teacher preparatory programs in an attempt to transform the field that has been so resistant to change for more than three decades. Once again, teacher education programs are under sometimes harsh and often bitter criticism that nothing ever changes in education.

Further, it has been acknowledged that these "first wave" mandated reforms were necessary for gaining public attention and support for change. A second purpose for the legislative attempts to upgrade teacher education was to assure the American public that more qualified students would be entering teacher preparatory programs as well as more quality assurance for the beginning teacher candidates upon program completion (Barr, 1987).

Historically, improvements suggested to the profession have involved tougher standards, "better" teachers, more academics, and more research based curriculum, etc. ("Recent Reports", 1983).

Edmund C. Short (1987) proposed a reshaped teacher education curriculum with it's associate teaching-learning processes to be at the heart of teacher education reform. He concluded that whatever else is restructured in teacher education-length, organization, governance, certification, accreditation, goals, recruitment, faculty, standards - everything comes together in the curriculum.

Collectively, educators and policymakers believe the focus of second wave period of implementation to be ways of restructuring program content so that teaching portrays characteristics attributed to other professions, drawing applicants desiring life-long careers and outstanding performance. However they further admit that the means of achieving such a change so far

has been elusive.

With this in mind, a thoughtful teacher educator might ask: What do students in teacher education programs have an opportunity to learn? What are the preconceptions about teaching and learning held by our students? How should we deal with these perceptions and beliefs of our students? How should we help prepare them for entry into our programs? Teacher educators who are planning and implementing recruitment efforts are seeking further insights into the perceptions of student groups concerning teaching as a career (Strickland, Page & Page, 1987).

Students begin teacher preparatory programs with their own ideas and beliefs about what it takes to be a successful teacher and are noted for expectations for their professional education being in stark contrast to those of candidates entering other professions who anticipate difficult access, hard work, a sense of academic value, and occupational continuation. Instead, present studies show that those entering teacher education to hold expectations that are predominantly negative, which in the view of teachers of teachers are contributoring factors for poor teacher-student interactions in preservice settings (Lanier & Little, 1986).

Additionally, teacher candidates often times expect simple access, easy work, minimal academic value, and occupational discontinuation. Recent research on teacher thinking by Clark (1988) suggests that teacher educators ask themselves how thoroughly and persuasively we inform our students there is more to teaching than meets the eye; that expertise in teaching is less a matter of knowing all the answers than a matter of making the most of novel events. Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann (1983) support this purporting that teaching is complicated in deceptively obvious ways, compounded by the students' expectations that they already have sufficient

understanding with little else of value to be learned.

The reform movement in education has spotlighted the need to evaluate and revise undergraduate programs to enhance students' awareness of teacher competencies related to teaching effectiveness. Specifically, many states have mandated numerous skills and competencies to be demonstrated by all beginning teachers.

The purpose of this study was to determine if preservice teachers perceived that state mandated competencies (Florida and Mississippi) as important and to determine if they felt competent in these same competencies.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of the study was twofold: (1) to determine preservice teachers' perceptions regarding the importance of teaching competencies included in two state teacher evaluation instruments, and (2) to determine the students' perceptions regarding their level of competence on the same items.

Methods and Procedure

The study consisted of 313 preservice teachers enrolled in elementary education at Mississippi State University and Florida State University in the Spring of 1989. All subjects were taking their first education courses containing field experiences.

The subjects responded to a survey instrument developed by the researchers to identify the preservice teachers' perceptions of teacher effectiveness. The teaching competencies that were included in both the Mississippi and Florida evaluation module were used to develop the instrument.

The subjects were asked to rate each statement concerning how

important and how competent they felt they were in these areas. The rating ranged from (1) extremely important to (5) not important and (1) extremely competent to (5) not competent. The first four statements concerned perception of teaching competencies in planning (Table I). The next seven statements concerned perception of classroom instruction competencies (Table II). The final three statements concerned classroom climate or environment competencies (Table III). The responses of the subjects to the instrument were analyzed using frequency tabulations.

Table I

PRESERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF TEACHING COMPETENCIES IN PLANNING

(1) Plans instruction to achieve selected objectives.

*Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent	**Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent
0				0	1	.3	.3
1	216	69.0	69.0	1	24	7.7	8.0
2	83	26.5	95.5	2	121	38.7	46.7
3	8	2.6	98.1	3	134	42.8	89.5
4				4	24	7.7	97.2
5	6	1.9	100.0	5	9	2.8	100.0

(2) Organize instruction to take into account individual differences among learners.

*Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent	**Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent
0				0	1	.3	.3
1	200	63.9	63.9	1	36	11.5	11.8
2	100	31.9	95.8	2	92	29.4	41.2
3	7	2.2	98.1	3	145	46.3	87.5
4	1	.3	98.4	4	31	9.9	97.4
5	5	1.6	100.0	5	8	2.6	100.0

(3) Obtains and uses information about the needs and progress of individual learners.

*Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent	**Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent
0				0			
1	189	60.4	60.4	1	37	11.8	11.8
2	107	34.2	94.6	2	104	33.2	45.0
3	10	3.2	97.8	3	132	42.2	87.2
4	1	.3	98.1	4	36	11.5	98.7
5	6	1.9	100.0	5	4	1.3	100.0

(Table I Continued)

(4) Obtains and uses information about the effectiveness of instruction to revise it when necessary.

*Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent	**Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent
0				0	4	1.3	1.3
1	139	44.4	44.4	1	26	8.3	9.6
2	137	43.8	88.2	2	107	34.2	43.8
3	30	9.6	97.8	3	133	42.5	86.3
4	2	.6	98.4	4	34	10.9	97.1
5	5	1.6	100.0	5	9	2.9	100.0

*(1) Extremely Important
(2) Very Important
(3) Somwhat Important
(4) Not Very Important
(5) Not Important

** (1) Extremely Competent
(2) Very Competent
(3) Somewhat Competent
(4) Not Very Competent
(5) Not Competent

Table II

PRESERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING COMPETENCIES IN CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

(5) Uses instructional techniques, methods, and media related to the objectives.

*Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent	**Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent
0				0	1	.3	.3
1	230	73.5	73.5	1	91	29.1	29.4
2	67	21.4	94.9	2	127	40.6	70.0
3	9	2.9	97.8	3	70	22.4	92.3
4	1	.3	98.1	4	20	6.4	98.7
5	6	1.9	100.0	5	4	1.3	100.0

(6) Communicates with learners.

*Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent	**Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent
0				0	3	1.0	1.0
1	208	66.5	66.5	1	78	24.9	25.9
2	81	25.9	92.3	2	96	30.7	56.5
3	18	5.8	98.1	3	94	30.0	86.6
4				4	33	10.5	97.1
5	6	1.9	100.0	5	9	2.9	100.0

(Table II Continued)

(7) Demonstrates a repertoire of teaching methods.

*Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent	**Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent
0	3	1.0	1.0	0	3	1.0	1.0
1	176	56.2	57.2	1	46	14.7	15.7
2	109	34.8	92.0	2	110	35.1	50.8
3	17	5.4	97.4	3	115	36.7	87.5
4	3	1.0	98.4	4	33	10.5	98.1
5	5	1.6	100.0	5	6	1.9	100.0

(8) Reinforces and encourages learner involvement in instruction.

*Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent	**Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent
0				0	1	.3	.3
1	216	69.0	69.0	1	68	21.7	22.0
2	87	27.8	96.8	2	128	40.9	62.9
3	5	1.6	98.4	3	87	27.8	90.7
4				4	27	8.6	99.4
5	5	1.6	100.0	5	2	.6	100.0

(9) Demonstrates an understanding of the school subject being taught and demonstrates its relevance.

*Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent	**Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent
0				0	1	.3	.3
1	199	63.6	63.6	1	66	21.1	21.4
2	102	32.6	96.2	2	126	40.3	61.7
3	8	2.6	98.7	3	93	29.7	91.4
4	1	.3	99.0	4	23	7.3	98.7
5	3	1.0	100.0	5	4	1.3	100.0

(Table II Continued)

(10) Organizes time, space, materials, and equipment for instruction.

*Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent	**Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent
0				0	2	.6	.6
1	158	50.5	50.5	1	58	18.5	19.2
2	121	38.7	89.1	2	133	42.5	61.7
3	26	8.3	97.4	3	96	30.7	92.3
4	4	1.3	98.7	4	19	6.1	98.4
5	4	1.3	100.0	5	5	1.6	100.0

(11) Demonstrates high expectations for learners' academic performance.

*Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent	**Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent
0				0			
1	224	71.6	71.6	1	92	29.4	29.4
2	75	24.0	95.5	2	146	46.6	76.0
3	8	2.6	98.1	3	59	18.8	94.9
4	1	.3	98.4	4	13	4.2	99.0
5	5	1.6	100.0	5	3	1.0	100.0

*(1) Extremely Important
(2) Very Important
(3) Somewhat Important
(4) Not Very Important
(5) Not Important

**(1) Extremely Competent
(2) Very Competent
(3) Somewhat Competent
(4) Not Very Competent
(5) Not Competent

Table III

PRESERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING COMPETENCIES IN CLASSROOM CLIMATE OR ENVIRONMENT

(12) Demonstrates enthusiasm for teaching and learning and the subject being taught.

*Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent	**Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent
0				0			
1	254	81.2	81.2	1	114	36.4	36.4
2	52	16.6	97.8	2	120	38.3	74.8
3	2	.6	98.4	3	67	21.4	96.2
4				4	9	2.9	99.0
5	5	1.6	100.0	5	3	1.0	100.0

(13) Helps learners develop positive self-concepts.

*Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent	**Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent
0	2			0	2	.6	.6
1	199	.6	.6	1	79	25.2	25.9
2	92	63.2	64.2	2	115	36.7	62.6
3	16	29.4	93.6	3	96	30.7	93.3
4	1	5.1	98.7	4	17	5.4	98.7
5	3	1.0	100.0	5	4	1.3	100.0

(14) Manages classroom interactions.

*Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent	**Value	Freq	Per	Cum Percent
0	3	1.0	1.0	0	2	.6	.6
1	156	49.8	50.8	1	50	16.0	16.6
2	133	42.5	93.3	2	107	34.2	50.8
3	17	5.4	98.7	3	122	39.0	89.8
4	1	.3	99.0	4	29	9.3	99.0
5	3	1.0	100.0	5	3	1.0	100.0

*(1) Extremely Important
(2) Very Important
(3) Somewhat Important
(4) Not Very Important
(5) Not Important

**(1) Extremely Competent
(2) Very Competent
(3) Somewhat Competent
(4) Not Very Competent
(5) Not Competent

Results

Specific findings of the study are identified in Tables I through III. As shown in Table I, 97.8 percent or more of the subjects perceived the competency about teacher planning to be important. Less than 2.3 percent thought these to be not important. Eighty-six point three percent of the respondents preceived themselves as competent in planning and less than 13.9 percent thought they were important.

The frequency tabulations and percentage for the classroom instruction portion of the survey are presented in Table II. Ninety-seven point four percent or more of the subjects perceived the items to be important. While 2.6 percent or less felt they were not important. Eighty-six point six percent or more of the subjects thought they were competent in the area and 13.4 percent thought they were not competent.

The frequency tabulations and percentage about classroom climate or environment are presented in Table III.

Ninety-three point six percent or more of the subjects perceived the items pertaining to climate or environment to be important. Six point one percent or less perceived the items to be not important.

Eighty-nine point eight percent or more perceived themselves to be competent and only 10.2 percent perceived themselves to be not competent.

Summary

The problem of this investigation was to determine preservice teachers' perception regarding the importance of teaching competencies included in two state evaluation instruments, and to determine the students' perceptions regarding their level of competence on the same items. The sample included 313 preservice teachers enrolled in elementary education at Mississippi State University and Florida State University in

the Spring of 1989. The survey instrument used to collect the data was developed by the researchers to identify the preservice teachers' perceptions of teacher effectiveness.

Conclusions

An examination of the obtained data revealed the following conclusions:

1. Preservice teachers' perceived the items pertaining to planning to be important (97.8%) and felt they were competent on these same items (86.3%).

2. Preservice teachers' perceived the items about classroom instruction to be important (97.4%) and felt they were competent on these items (86.6%).

3. Preservice teachers' perceived the items concerning climate or environment to be important (93.6%) and felt they were competent on these items (89.8%).

4. Preservice teachers' perceived the teaching competencies included in the state's evaluation instruments to be important and felt competent on these items. This finding is supported by Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann (1983) ..."they already have sufficient understanding with little else of value to be learned."

Recommendations

The following recommendation is proposed:

A similar longitudinal study should be conducted at these points in the preservice teachers' college/professional career (1) prior to any field-based experience, (2) after twenty hours of field-based experience, (3) after student teaching, and (4) after completion of one year teaching experience.

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